



AFRICA COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY-ACT

Training Redemptive Servant Leaders

STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

AUGUST 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this document, Africa College of Theology (ACT) demonstrates its commitment to providing an excellent education and student experience in an innovative and supportive environment where students and staff alike can flourish and reach their potential. It sets out the ACT Staff Development Policy and outlines available development opportunities and potential funding. The quality and distinctiveness of ACT's student experience are at the heart of everything we do. This means demonstrating excellence in the areas of our education, providing innovative teaching and learning approaches with a focus on real-world learning, employability, and entrepreneurship across the disciplines; and providing opportunity by developing and nurturing ambition and potential. In addition, and most importantly for our long-term growth and sustainability, to achieve Taught Degree Awarding Powers and College status.

The key to realizing these ambitions is to provide excellence in teaching and learning by embedding innovation, quality, equality, and diversity into our student experience. This can only be achieved by employing, developing, and retaining highly qualified, innovative, and inspirational academic and professional services staff who all share and work towards these strategic goals. Staff development is a way in which we enable and engage staff in efforts to contribute to the implementation of effectiveness and excellence.

2. EXPLANATION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff training and development is a means to ensure an organization's workforce is adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform well in their current work role and in the future to assist ACT in achieving its objectives. This may be achieved in several ways e.g. formal education programs, attendance at conferences/events, coaching, mentoring, shadowing, one-on-one work, internal workshops, and forums. Access to development must be fair, equitable, and beneficial to the department and the organization as a whole.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The ACT's Staff Development Policy aims to develop a culture of innovation, excellence, and inspiration for our students and provide staff, both academic and professional, with the knowledge and skills they require to further our strategic aims to become a college and one that is best known for pastoral and ministry-engagement, innovative real-world learning experiences and innovative pedagogies, and developing talent and potential to provide opportunity.

To meet those aims, we have the following objectives. Africa College of Theology will:

- 1 Provide a range of professional development opportunities that support and encourage all staff to acquire and develop the relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies to enhance their performance in their current role and, for their next

role in their career, while recognizing that ultimately each individual has the responsibility to develop his/her own

skills;

- 2 Develop a career framework for all staff including academic promotion;
- 3 Engender an environment that encourages students, academics, professional staff, industry colleagues, and other relevant stakeholders to co-create and collaborate on research and development projects, and other scholarly activities;
- 4 Provide a range of teaching and learning enhancement opportunities for all staff who support our students' learning including academics, associate lecturers, teaching and professional services staff;
- 5 Develop an academic team who is qualified to teach in higher education by providing accredited programs and professional recognition of a teaching scheme that enables staff to keep the accreditation of HEC and support for studying relevant programs with other providers;
- 6 Create a culture of reflection and evaluation of teaching practice by encouraging academic staff to engage in peer support/observation of teaching and use methods of evaluation from a variety of sources to review and enhance their practice as is relevant to their job;
- 7 Ensure that academic staff are suitably skilled to supervise both undergraduate and postgraduate students' research projects (where relevant and appropriate) by providing supervisors with initial training and updates, and an experienced mentor allocated to colleagues new to supervision.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Individuals are responsible for identifying and suggesting learning opportunities to their managers based on their current job descriptions and career aspirations. They are expected to undertake a range of opportunities to enable them to update their knowledge and skills and adapt and respond to change.

Supervisors are expected to encourage and support all staff (regardless of job role, grade, and work patterns) to take advantage of internal and external staff development opportunities relevant to their identified development needs. Managers should support staff to identify and discuss those development needs with each of their staff at induction/probation and at least annually as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) Process and needs identified by departments during their annual planning and budgetary cycle. Managers must agree with any activity and sign request forms allowing this to proceed and agree with the time away from work. On completion of the event, it is expected that managers will facilitate the dissemination of the new learning in the workplace, as appropriate, either through the individual or in the context of a team learning event.

ACT **Human Resources** is centrally responsible for providing advice, guidance, and opportunities for staff. It is also responsible for evaluating all centrally funded events to ensure they are cost-effective and to the benefit of the organization.

5. CORE CAPABILITIES OF ACT STAFF

This will be dependent on the individual's role and will be outlined within their job descriptions; however, all professional staff should understand and be able to demonstrate that understanding of the following in their day-to-day work and will be supported to do so through a wide range of staff development opportunities and systems as outlined in this section:

- 1 The overarching aims and objectives of ACT;
- 2 The goals of ACT to achieve taught degree awarding powers and college status and how they contribute to forwarding these goals;
- 3 What does an excellent student experience look like how his/her role contributes to this and how to gain support to improve his/her skills and knowledge to do this well;
- 4 Engage with the wider ACT Academic Community of academics, employers, students, colleagues from ACT, other higher education institutions, and their Pastoral professional community.

Prioritizing the learner experience

Above all else, our staff will put the educational experience of our students first. A key part of the ACT academic's role is to perpetually:

- 1 strive to raise the benchmark of interaction with our learners;
- 2 consider the impact on the learner experience in the actions they take; and
- 3 identify and, where possible, implement innovative ways to add value to our student's learning experience.

There will be opportunities through the academic year for colleagues to attend staff meetings, Teaching and Learning/Research and Innovation Forums (as appropriate to their role), Continuous Professional Development sessions, get involved in activities such as mentoring/coaching, shadowing to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and opportunities available to them, as well as fostering a professional community.

6. ADDITIONAL CORE CAPABILITIES OF ACADEMIC STAFF

In addition to the core capabilities for all ACT staff, we aim to develop our academic staff to ensure a high-quality learning environment for our students and so to have the following characteristic capabilities, and to create a working culture within which these characteristics and capabilities are fostered.

7. EXCELLENT SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

All academic staff should be able to inspire students by demonstrating enthusiasm and excellent knowledge of their subject. They should hold a postgraduate degree or relevant professional qualification in their discipline. Ideally, staff should be recognized as an expert in his/her field through, for example, ministerial or academic experience/reputation/national/international standing, research/scholarly activity, or awards.

8. TEACHING

All academic staff should aspire to be innovative in the way that they teach their subject and model exemplary professional practice. Academic staff are encouraged to provide excellent teaching underpinned by evidence-based pedagogic theory and practice. Colleagues joining us to enhance the curriculum from ministry backgrounds will be invited to engage in our staff development program or activities. Associate tutors will be expected to undertake the induction program as it is framed around the ACT student experience.

9. MINISTRY AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

As the central tenet of our mission and aspirations is to be a leader in ministry-focused education and training, it is an essential part of ACT's academic role to engage with churches regularly to ensure that we are preparing students to become highly sought after in the church ministry world. This could be through their ongoing professional practice in their field or with a particular organization, sourcing pastors who are knowledge experts to enhance their modules/programs through teaching/mentoring students, engaging in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), consultancy projects, research, and ensuring that the most up to date leadership and theology knowledge and practice are informing and indeed driving the curriculum, teaching, and learning.

10. ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

All levels of academic staff are expected to undertake the necessary administration to plan, deliver, assess, and evaluate teaching and learning on their modules, and generally manage and support the learning experience. Some lecturer roles will require leadership and management of modules or programmes. Staff will be supported and prepared to undertake these roles through induction and ongoing staff development.

11. SCHOLARSHIP

Academic staff should be encouraged to write papers or other works for publication either in academic or professional journals to contribute to the knowledge base of their discipline/profession and/or contribute to its dissemination through conference presentations.

12.RESEARCH

Academic staff will enhance student learning and develop future researchers and innovators by providing a 'real-world' and inquiry-based curriculum and excelling in research-informed teaching. To do so, they are encouraged to engage in research, development, innovation, and church or ministry projects within their subject/profession and actively seek to collaborate with external partners such as church and ministry bodies and other higher education.

13.ACADEMIC AND PASTORAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

ACT academics will be a source of inspiration to students by their example of expertise and professionalism. Staff will be expected to provide both academic and pastoral support to students to help foster the ACT graduate attributes and ensure a safe, kind, and supported environment to enable our students to flourish.

14.PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The ACT Performance and Development Review procedure provides an opportunity for every member of staff to meet with their supervisor, or a senior member of staff designated by their supervisor, to discuss their work performance, objectives for the next 12 months, and their professional development needs. This supports the allocation of funding for staff development purposes.

15.STAFF INDUCTION

There will be a program of induction activities for all staff at ACT to enable them to:

- understand how their role contributes to achieving higher-level objectives of ACT,
- have an introduction to the policies, people, practices, and systems in ACT, including line management and performance review, and the wider ACT that they will need to know to carry out their role effectively,
- road map their first few weeks in their post after which the member of staff will write his/her own performance objectives in consultation with his/her supervisor.

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16.ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the above, ACT will provide an induction program for all academic staff,

associate tutors and mentors supporting students in the program. For tutors, this will include an introduction to educational software and the library, and how it works in program delivery/student engagement, assessment guidance, and all the associated paperwork.

There will also be Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops offered throughout the academic year (all themed around ACT's mission), an opportunity to undertake accredited modules and access to our online academic staff development program with the opportunity to achieve professional recognition of their teaching with the Higher Leadership and Theological Education.

17.INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This is a two-day short course to prepare new lecturers to ACT and associate tutors to teach in higher education and will cover topics such as:

- Introduction to teaching and learning at ACT
- Fundamentals of teaching and learning theory and practice
- Engaging learners
- Using technology to enhance learning
- Teaching large and small groups
- Problem/inquiry-based learning
- Making it real' – how does this work at work?
- Assessment and feedback
- Evaluation of practice and professional development

18.CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/ONLINE PROGRAMME

ACT will run a number of staff development workshops each year to enhance the student experience and align to key developments and strategic imperatives.

19.TEACHING AND LEARNING FORUM (TLF)

The TLF provides the opportunity on a bi-monthly basis to share ideas and discuss issues related to teaching and learning (pedagogy) and the wider student experience. It is not meant to be, per se, staff development as much as an informal and social way to engage with colleagues around issues that are important to them to improve life at ACT for our students, as well as engage in intellectual debate and find answers to questions. Colleagues are encouraged to present any projects they may be working on, discuss the latest evidence on theological and leadership issues, or give feedback on good practice from conferences, churches, or other institutions. There will also be guest speakers at some of the forums to give expert insight into topics decided by colleagues. It also aims to provoke innovation in teaching and learning across programs, disciplines, and professional groups.

20.RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FORUM (RIF)

In a similar way to the TLF, the Research and Innovation Forum provides an opportunity on an annual basis for colleagues to present their research and scholarship ask questions and gain feedback on work in progress, present and update on leadership and theology projects, and work with other institutions. There will normally be two papers in each session related to a particular theme.

21. PEER SUPPORT OF TEACHING

All lecturers should take part in Peer Support of Teaching at least once a year as it provides an opportunity to develop practice and discuss teaching and learning issues with a colleague in a confidential environment thus engendering a culture for the enhancement of the student learning experience at ACT.

The emphasis is on positive recognition and development of good practice rather than on evaluation. Peer support of teaching (where appropriate to their role) ideally would consist of:

- an observation of teaching
- a discussion of practice

22.SUPPORT FOR EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES WITH ORWITHOUT QUALIFICATION

On occasion, a member of staff's role will require him/her to engage with the wider academic or professional community, or indeed develop links with churches, organizations, and other colleges in Rwanda and abroad, which necessitates attending an external program that may or may not result in a formal qualification. In addition, there are certain activities, particularly for academic staff, which will especially help the furthering of our key strategic aims and college status, in particular:

- Research and scholarly activity – undertaking research degrees/projects, engaging with the wider academic community by way of conference attendance/presentations, academic visits, writing for publication, consultancy; holding a doctoral level qualification (or Master's aligned to their role for professional staff);
- Activities to improve teaching and learning – education-focused conferences. There are two ways in which the College may support an external development activity – money and time.

Money can be paid to support direct costs such as fees, travel, and subsistence.

Time can be granted to free the member of staff from regular duties to undertake the activity.

The majority of an individual's staff development needs will be able to be supported through ACT's staff development and/or ACT's range of activities which is led (and facilitated) by the Principal of the College for employer engagement and student experience.

Supervisors are expected to discuss and agree to staff development needs with each of their staff at least annually as part of the Professional Development Review Process, ensuring they are aligned with the required objectives of the Department and the College. There is a need to manage an individual's expectations when discussing staff development needs as the boundary between what is required by the department and an individual's personal preference is not always aligned or clear and may vary from individual to individual within the same team-learning

ACT will have a yearly staff development budget allocation to pay for conferences/short courses for individuals and any other activity to support the department. This can be used at the discretion of the Principal. However, if an individual is to attend a short course or conference over US\$500 and requires any support for substantive programs of education resulting in a qualification, this need will be signed off by the Chancellor of the College for employer engagement and student experience. This is to ensure that there is a fair and appropriate distribution of resources, that the activity is aligned with strategic aims and to support that individual with projects, study leave/examination leave, or dissemination activities as appropriate.

If support for external activity is agreed upon, a request form must be signed and approved by the employee's supervisor and the Principal. All financially supported staff development should be reported on a timely basis to the Principal in order to monitor the demand for

external training and help to inform in-house provision.

Where the fees for an individual's external program or course are to be paid for by the College, the individual member of staff will be required to pay back a proportion of the fees if they leave the employment of the College of their own volition within five years. There is also an expectation that staff who undertake an externally supported course bring back their learning to colleagues. This may take the form of a short presentation at a team/college meeting, a seminar session in the teaching and learning forum, leading a workshop contributing to a taught student session, and so on the level of dissemination will, of course, depend on the activity and the role of the member of staff.

APPROVAL

This policy is duly approved by

THE SENATE AND THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

AUGUST 2023